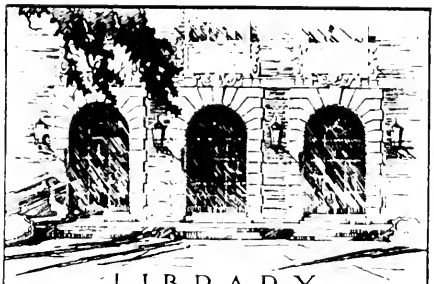

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8.

CHRISTIANITY

AND

HINDUISM.

A LECTURE

ADDRESSED TO EDUCATED HINDUS;

IN FOUR PARTS:

BY

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"Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."

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FOR THE SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE.

CHRISTIANITY AND HINDUISM.

PART I.

No European can have resided any length of time in India without having formed some estimate of the religion generally prevalent amongst the people, the religion commonly called Hinduism, or the worship of Siva and Vishnu. He cannot also have failed to form some opinion respecting the relation of Christianity to Hinduism. I think I may safely say that I have enjoyed particularly good opportunities of arriving at a correct judgment, for during the more than forty years that I have been resident in India I have been an attentive reader of Hindu books, and have always had my eyes and ears open to see and hear what was going on amongst the masses. Hindus, therefore, might perhaps like to know the estimate I have formed.

I recognise in Hinduism three elements

which have contributed in various degrees to make it what it is.

First, there is the merely human element, which manifests itself in beliefs and practices that appear to be the legitimate outcome of Indian human nature. As instances of this merely human element in Hinduism, I might adduce its deification of natural forces and phenomena, its worship of heroes and heroines, its localisation of God in temples and idols, its representation of God as a human king, with human needs, passions, and tastes, to be worshipped with the ceremonial usual in a Hindu palace, its elevation of caste distinctions to the rank of a religious obligation. In these particulars, I think, no candid Hindu can fail to see in Hinduism the existence of an element merely human.

I recognise also in Hinduism a higher element, an element which I cannot but regard as divine, struggling with what is earthly and evil in it, or what is merely human, and though frequently foiled or overborne, never entirely destroyed. I trace the operation of this divine element in the religiousness—the habit of seeing God in all things and all things in God—which has formed so marked a characteristic of the people of India in every period of their history.

I trace it in the conviction universally entertained that there is a God, however diversely His attributes may be conceived, through whom or in whom all things are believed to have their being. I trace it in the conviction that a religion—a method of worshipping God—is possible, desirable, necessary. I trace it in the conviction that man has somehow become sinful and has separated from God, and that he needs somehow to be freed from sin and united to God again. But especially I trace it in the conviction I have found almost universally entertained by thoughtful Hindus, that a remedy for the ills of life, an explanation of its difficulties and mysteries, and an appointment of a system of means for seeking God's favour and rising to a higher life—that is, a Veda, a revelation—is to be expected; nay more, that such a revelation has been given; the only doubt which suggests itself to the Hindu mind being, whether the Indian Veda is the only true one, or whether God may have given different revelations of His will to different races of men at different times. I trace the same element also in the important place occupied in Indian classical literature by moral and religious disquisitions and in Indian popular literature and common life by moral and religious maxims.

I cannot hesitate to recognise in such movements of mind as these, though outside the pale of Christianity, the results of an impulse from above, seeing that in human society, and especially in the domain of morals, we may always and everywhere see a Divine Purpose working itself into shape. As a Christian I have been taught to believe that God's Spirit "strives" with all men, even with bad men, for their good[1], and that even in the times in which the densest ignorance prevailed "God left Himself not without a witness, in that He did good, giving men rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with joy and gladness[2]," and giving them not merely things necessary for their bodily sustenance, but blessings of greater value still, a conscience capable of discerning between good and evil, and a nature capable of religious sentiments and emotions. Whilst I regard this explanation as perfectly valid as far as it goes, I feel persuaded that some at least of the higher elements in Hinduism to which I have referred must have proceeded from distinctively Christian sources. When I look at some of the developments of Hinduism which made their appearance in the secondary period of its history, such,

[1] Gen. vi. 3. [2] Acts xiv. 17.

for example, as the doctrine of incarnations—especially the legends relating to the incarnation of Krishna, some of which seem so evidently founded on a distorted version of the Gospel history of Christ;—when I look at the teaching of certain Indian theoscopic books of authority, belonging probably to a still later period, such as the Bhagavad Gîtâ, and especially to the undoubtedly later compositions of certain devout writers belonging to various South Indian schools;—when I look at their doctrine of faith, of grace, of divine love, of a heavenly teacher coming in the form of man, of the relation between faith and works, of the relation of divine grace to the human will in salvation—I cannot help regarding it as highly probable that we have before us a result of the contact of the Indian mind with distinctively Christian teaching at some former period—though when and how such contact took place may appear at present quite uncertain.

It is strange that it is at this point—not in connection with the merely human element in Hinduism—that we are confronted with the most remarkable evidence of the existence in it of an element which can scarcely be described otherwise than as diabolical. One of the worst things in modern India is the sensual worship

of Krishna, as practised by some of the more enthusiastic sects, and this seems to run in parallel lines with one of the highest developments of Christian piety—the personal love of the devout soul to the Divine Saviour of men. That which appeared to be most truly divine in its original shape has become earthly, sensual, if not altogether devilish, by contact with impure minds. Corruptions of the best things are the worst. Allied to this impure worship, though still more deplorable, is the worship of the *Sakti*, or female energy, of Siva, by the left hand division of one of the Saiva sects. I think I may safely also place in this category the worship of devils or evil spirits, which prevails so extensively in some parts of India, and which, though independent of Brahmanism in its origin, and probably much older, has been amalgamated with it as one of the authorised developments of the worship of Siva. I cannot do otherwise than assign the worst place in this bad category to that element in Hinduism which, under the venerated name of religion, teaches immorality, either by precept, or by representing divine personages as licentious, cruel, or otherwise immoral, or by giving licentious, cruel, or otherwise immoral practices a place in divine worship. When the inhabitants of almost every con-

siderable village in India notice the place occupied in their temple worship by the performances of the dancing girls, what must be the nature of the lessons they think themselves authorised to learn, respecting the character and tastes of the gods and the course of conduct prohibited or not prohibited to their worshippers?

It would be an error to suppose that Christians are now for the first time learning to discriminate between what is good in Hinduism and in Hindu literature and what is bad. Christian Missionaries have long been accustomed to make use of extracts from Indian books of authority for the purpose of showing that Christianity is not, as Hindus are apt to fancy, an outlandish novelty, but that in reality it is in accordance with the best sentiments of India's best minds. We must take care, however, not to fall into an error in the opposite direction, for not only is it a fact that evil as well as good exists in Hindu writings, but it is also a fact that the evil is in excess of the good, and very much more popular and influential. A very misleading impression might be produced by a series of extracts taken with the best intentions from Indian books. A volume has been published entitled "Indian Wisdom," con-

sisting mainly of extracts from celebrated Indian books, and containing moral and religious sentiments of a very high order. These extracts are perfectly correct and faithful as far as they go, and very interesting, and they would afford conclusive evidence against any person who should suppose that Indian literature contained nothing but what was bad. But it must not be forgotten, as it sometimes is, that they exhibit after all only one side of the picture; for it would be easy to compile from the same sources not one volume of extracts merely, but many, which should be worthy of being entitled "Indian Folly." The author of the book referred to was well aware of this fact and stated it most distinctly, but some of his readers are probably not aware of it.

It is a peculiarity of the Mahâ-bhârata—that great storehouse of old Indian traditions, from which many of those moral maxims have been taken—that everybody in it is constantly giving good advice to everybody, whilst nobody follows anybody's good advice. The gods themselves are far from setting the human race an example of goodness. There is hardly a virtue which is not lauded in some Indian book, but on the other hand there is hardly a crime that is not encouraged by the example of some Indian

divinity. If any one will take the trouble of reading from the beginning to the end the account given in the Mahâ-bhârata, as in the principal Purânas, of the origin of eclipses, he will feel astonished, not so much at the false science of the account, as at the low, tricky morality and indecency attributed to the gods, superior as well as inferior. He will also see the impossibility of admitting that the immoral tendency of such stories about divine personages can be counterbalanced by the mere enunciation by some person of less importance of any number of moral maxims, however excellent in themselves such maxims may be. The evil has been aggravated in the vernacular versions of those books, in which whatever is bad in Sanskrit is made much worse; e. g. in Tamil, in which it has been found a practical difficulty to select any consecutive portion of the great classical works, suitable in length, and not morally unsuitable, for the University Examinations.

Hindus sometimes wish us to form our estimate of Hinduism, not from what we see of it amongst the people around, but from the representations of it which they suppose to be contained in the Vedas and other sacred books. I admit that the representations contained in

those books ought not to be left out of account, for we cannot but be aware of the possibility of a religion, when it becomes popular, moving away from its original basis. It would be unfair, however, to wish to restrict us to the contents of those books alone, the system of religion the Vedas teach being at present of little more than antiquarian interest. If by the Vedas we understand, as we ought to do, the Vedic hymns, the feeling which must necessarily swallow up every other in the mind of a Hindu who becomes acquainted with them for the first time is that of wonder how it ever came about that the religion of those hymns ever developed, or degenerated, into the Hinduism of the present day. If, on the other hand, by the Vedas we are to understand the Upanishadas, or theosophic treatises appended to the Vedas, which form the only portion of the Vedic writings ever cared for by the Hindus in later times, we find that the system they teach is a philosophy, not a religion, a philosophy nearly identical with Vedantism.

We are sometimes asked to form our ideas of Hinduism from the philosopical systems. But though it is true that those philosophies are regarded by many Hindus—most erroneously, I think—as forming the innermost essence of

their religion, and though it is also true that the influence of those philosophies on all classes of the people, down almost to the lowest, is greater than that of any other philosophies in the world, I regard them as in reality independent of religion altogether. Vedantism, for example, the dreamiest and therefore the most popular of those philosophies, is simply the extremest form of idealism. It idealises not matter only, but also mind, sensation, and consciousness. At its bidding the world, the human soul, the gods, the Vedas themselves, disappear, and nothing remains, but God, the great Impersonal Thought. Hence a Vedantist might be either a Vaishnava or a Saiva. He might be a Muhammadan, as the Sûfism of Persia testifies. It is not inconceivable even that he should be a Christian.

It is necessary also to bear in mind that practically it matters very little in general what theosophy or philosophy a Hindu professes, what his ideas may be about the most ancient form of his religion, or even what his ideas may be about the religious reforms that the age is said to require. As a matter of fact, and in so far as his actual course in life is concerned, he is content, except in a small number of exceptional cases, to adhere with scrupulous care to the tra-

ditionary usages of his caste and sect. His ideas may have received a tincture from his English education, but ordinarily his actions differ in no particular of any importance from those of his progenitors.

Hence, if we wish to form an accurate estimate of Hinduism as a religion, we must found our judgment not merely on the statements contained in the sacred books—still less on the teaching of the better portion of these books alone—but mainly on the forms in which it manifests itself in daily life amongst the masses and the tone of mind and style of character it produces. We must judge it by its fruits. Judging of Hinduism in this way, the conclusion to be deduced from the actual facts of the case is, that it has either originated or aggravated many of the worst evils the country endures—especially its ignorance, its superstition, its dreaminess, its slavery to the authority of great names; that it is one of the chief obstacles that exist to progress of every kind—intellectual, moral, and even material; and hence that its disappearance from the scene and the peaceful extension of Christianity instead would be as life from the dead. Christianity would be the best realisation of the visions of its seers and the best fulfilments of the longings of its

sages. It would deliver that which is good in it from the bondage of corruption, it would enable it to cast out that which is evil, and it would dissipate the clouds which hide from it the face of God.

It appears to me that we miss one of the principal purposes Divine Providence had in view in bestowing on us a larger share of knowledge and mental culture than many around us possess, if we content ourselves with selfishly enjoying the privileges that have been conferred upon us without endeavouring to make the land we live in and the society we belong to better than we found them. And if we wish to make ourselves really useful to our people, we must not be content with eulogising what we consider good in them, but must also endeavour to help them to condemn and reject that which is evil. There are not a few of the people of this country who have acquired sufficient enlightenment to perceive and approve what is good, but unhappily the same persons are often found too timid in carrying into practice what they approve, and are far too tolerant of evil; in consequence of which, though there is much room for reform in every department of things in India—in social usages, in morals, and in religion—and though the necessity of such reforms is admitted, many

persons gladly welcome any excuse for letting things remain as they are. What this country most urgently needs is a good supply of moral courage.

PART II.

CHRISTIANITY possesses many elements in common with other religions, yet there are also certain important particulars in which it stands alone. Christians can have no objection, therefore, to the extension to Christianity of the comparative method of examination, provided only that the comparison be fairly made. What I think open to objection is a comparison which attempts to prove the absence of essential differences between the things compared by the easy process of omitting essential differences. When Christianity is to be compared with other religions it is but fair to stipulate that the Christianity so compared should be the Christianity of the Bible and the Christian Church, not a Christianity denuded of its most essential characteristics—a Christianity without the Incarnation, a Christianity without the Cross, a Christianity without Christ. I willingly admit, however, that this is a fault with which Hindus are rarely, if ever, chargeable. The persons most open to blame in this particular are persons of my own race. To omit, whether directly or by

implication, as some persons have done in comparing Christianity with other religions, those characteristics of historic Christianity to which I have referred, would, as it appears to me, be as unscientific as to omit the consideration of specific differences in the classification of zoological or botanical species. Man's position in the world cannot fairly be determined if we describe him only by those physical qualities which he possesses in common with the rest of the animal creation, without taking into account his conscious intelligence, his power of speech, his reasoning powers, his sense of moral obligation, his capacity for religion, in virtue of which endowments he claims, and justly claims, to have been made in the image of God. May I not carry out the parallel by affirming that as man is God's interpreter to nature, so Christianity is God's interpreter to man; and that what man is amongst the denizens of the forest and the field, and in the world of nature generally, that, and a great deal more, is Christianity amongst the religions and superstitions of the world? If compared with other religions fairly and in a truly scientific spirit it will be found that Christianity occupies not only the highest position, but a position perfectly unique. It will be found that it testifies of itself that it is

divine, by teaching men of their relation to God and of God's relation to them, and of sin and salvation, as no other religion does or ever did.

The essential differences between Christianity and Hinduism and the desirability of gaining a distinct idea of those differences will appear, I think, in a clear light when I endeavour to show why Hindus should not only learn to think favourably of Christianity, as many of them are willing to do, but should see the necessity of becoming Christians.

In attempting to set the evidences of Christianity in a clear light before the Natives of India we find ourselves met at the outset by a special difficulty. The difficulty is that one entire class of evidences—what are called the external evidences of Christianity—that is, evidences and arguments founded on history, or which presuppose some knowledge of history, can only be appreciated by a very small number of persons. Something worthy in some degree of being called history exists in Cashmere, in the extreme north, and in Ceylon, in the extreme south; but in India Proper not a single narrative that can properly be called history has ever been written by Hindus, History has always been discouraged in India by the prevalence amongst the people of idealistic philoso-

phies and their preference of poetical embellishment to truth. Hence arguments founded on the history of the Bible, the history of Christianity and the history of the Church—though they may appear perfectly valid to European Christians, accustomed to the study of histories worthy of the name, accustomed to use the term historical as synonymous with true, and therefore accustomed to venerate history, as a court from whose verdict there is no appeal—such arguments may naturally, yet without any fault of their own, be expected to fall flat on the ears of persons brought up in a country in which history, as distinguished from poetical fictions, was till lately unknown, and in which it is still understood and appreciated only by a few. For this reason arguments founded on miracles and prophecy, however valid in themselves, are liable in this country to be undervalued. When I assert, for instance, with regard to the evidence on which we believe the most momentous of all miracles, the Resurrection of Christ, that the testimony of such men as the witnesses to that miracle were—so delivered and sealed as their testimony was—is of a kind which has never proved fallacious, I make an assertion which, without some knowledge of the facts of history and some historical insight, will

seem an assertion and nothing more. In the absence of history, miracles, to carry conviction, would have to be performed again and again in the presence of each company of persons we wished to convince. For the same reason it depends upon a person's acquaintance with history whether he is able or not to appreciate the force of the evidence from prophecy. Take, for example, the remarkable prophecies contained in the Bible respecting the dispersion of the Jews in all lands and their unity as a people notwithstanding their dispersion. Though we see those prophecies being fulfilled daily in every part of the world, their fulfilment will not have its due weight in the minds of persons unacquainted with history, and unacquainted, therefore, with the historical evidence on which both the prophecies themselves and the events by which they are fulfilled depend. Were it not for history, prophecies, to carry conviction, would have to be uttered in the people's hearing and fulfilled in their sight.

Ignorance of the law, it is said, is not a valid excuse for illegal actions; so ignorance of history is not a valid excuse for unbelief. It is a happy circumstance, however, that it requires no acquaintance with history on the part of the Natives of this country to appreciate, as fully as

European Christians can, the force and value of some of the principal internal evidences of the truth of Christianity. They are in a better position indeed than European Christians themselves for appreciating some of those evidences, seeing that they know, or have the means of knowing, by their own bitter experience the evils and disadvantages which even in this life fall to the lot of those who are ignorant of the true light of the world.

It must be evident, for instance, to every one who is acquainted with Hinduism, and who has followed it in its downward course through the various shapes it has assumed, that Christianity is pre-eminently a reasonable religion. I need not spend time on this point, for even those Natives who most resolutely resist its claims on their personal allegiance are ready to admit that of all the religions which this country or the world has known it is the most reasonable. They also admit that of all the modes in which God is worshipped in this country Christian worship is most deserving of being called a "reasonable service."

It must be evident also to every one who is acquainted with the actual condition of this country that Christianity is the only religion known in it which systematically promotes

knowledge. Wherever it spreads, education spreads. The school always either precedes, or accompanies, or follows the church. When Christianity makes its appearance in a place, measures are immediately, and for the first time, adopted for the promotion of female education, and the elements of knowledge for the first time begin to reach the neglected lower classes. The age of mental lethargy and mental slavery comes to an end, and people of every rank find that they are encouraged to think, to observe, to inquire, and to compare.

It must be admitted, again, that Christianity is the only religion known in this country or in the world which is really a friend to progress. It proclaims to all men that knowledge is power, that knowledge is victory, and thereby it fills the world with discoveries and wonders. Christians are encouraged to endeavour to make continual progress in every thing that is conducive to their happiness, whether for time or eternity. Under every other religion or form of religion, whether in India or in Europe, whether in ancient or in modern times, civilisation has either retrograded or has stood still. Christian civilisation alone has never ceased to make progress, and it appears to me that it never can cease, seeing that it carries within

itself all needful principles of self-incitement, self-adjustment, and self-recovery.

Need I say, in addressing Natives of India, that it is a distinguishing excellence of Christianity that it bestows on the people, wherever it prevails, the blessings of order and peace? In whatever part of India our Christian government has gained supreme power, there, as you are aware, wars and commotions have ceased, and every person, whatever his race, caste, or creed, finds himself, for the first time in history, permitted to cultivate in peace the arts of peace. This cannot but be admitted, but some persons who admit the fact may perhaps demur to the explanation. They may attribute the reign of peace we have now the pleasure of seeing established throughout India to the strength of the English government alone. But this, as it seems to me, is a serious error. For the English, being so strong, so courageous, and a race so naturally fierce as they are admitted to be, would, if they were not Christians, be the most formidable enemies to order and peace this country has ever seen. Every part of the country would be desolated by violence and rapine, and the insurrections and intestine wars that would inevitably follow would surpass in horror those by which the histories of the

Hindu and Muhammadan governments that preceded ours were disgraced. The English government is a peaceful government, mainly because it is a just, unselfish, paternal government; and it is just, unselfish, and paternal, because, whatever the private character of individual rulers may be, looking at the objects at which it aims and its principles of action, it must be pronounced to be essentially a Christian government. Without imposing its faith on any and without favouring converts to its faith, our Government testifies to the people of every province in India that Christianity is only another name for the highest civic good.

The considerations to which I have now called your attention pertain, it is true, only to the secular aspects—the outworks—of religion; but such as they are, the position occupied by Christianity in this country with reference to the particulars I have mentioned, when compared with the position occupied by the indigenous religions of India, justifies the presumption that Christianity proceeds, in some unique way, from Him who made man and who wills that men should be happy both in this world and in the next. These considerations are so obvious to every reflecting mind, and so obviously true, that Christianity has become the religion of

all the well-governed, highly-civilised nations in the world, so that Christianity and civilisation have become almost conterminous, and in some respects almost convertible terms.

Let me invite your consideration now to a class of considerations of still higher significance.

Hindus are accustomed to say that Hinduism is suited to themselves, though it might be more correct simply to say that it is the religion they are accustomed to. But they never hold also that it is suited to us Europeans. They admit that it is unsuited to us, and they are ready to admit that they cannot conceive of a time ever arriving when it will be a suitable thing for English people to worship wood and stone. Now, on the contrary, it is the special boast and glory of Christianity that it is suited not to English people only, but to people of every country, language, race, and class; and this ought to be the case if Christianity really came from God; for man's nature and needs are the same in England and in India. Sin and virtue are the same everywhere. Men may be black or white, red or olive, they may have been Brahmans or outcasts, but God's grace, as Christianity teaches us to realise it, will be found to confer the same blessings on

all. Meats and drinks may vary, but righteousness, peace, and spiritual joy vary not. Hence, in visible illustration of the universality of the blessings Christianity desires to confer, the doors of the Christian Church stand open to all, and the Christian Scriptures, unlike the Vedas and the Kuran, have been translated into every language in India, that the opportunity of studying them may be placed within the reach of all.

Again, as we hold that Christianity is suited to all, so it is certain that it aims at the conversion of all. Hinduism is content with the adhesion of a certain proportion of the inhabitants of this one country only, and views with unconcern the condition of those immense regions, constituting by far the greater part of the world, in which the Indian gods and goddesses are unknown. Christianity, on the other hand, strong in its conviction that it proceeded from the Common Father of all and that it is suited to the needs of all, aims at nothing less than the peaceful conquest of the whole earth.

This aim is not to be considered merely a theory or a sentiment, with little or no basis in actual facts. Buddhism at one time, like Christianity, aimed at the conquest of the world, but it is well known that its missionary zeal

has long ere this died out. But Christianity shows no signs of forgetting its high mission in the world or its Founder's command that it should evangelise all nations. On the contrary, there never was a time, during the nineteen centuries that Christianity has been known upon earth, when the missionary zeal of the Christian Church was so fervid as it is now. Nor is it merely a zeal on paper, manifesting itself in professions and resolutions. It manifests itself in the most practical way conceivable, in the constantly increasing number of missionaries that Christendom sends forth year by year to the ends of the earth. The number of missionaries that go forth annually from Europe and America is one of the wonders of our time, and it is a wonder which can only be explained on the supposition that it is the result of a divine impulse, testifying that Christianity itself has proceeded from God. The missionary zeal bears witness before the world to the undying power of Christian faith and the undying fire of Christian love, and thereby encourages us to augur that it is only a question of time when Right shall everywhere become Might, and Love be Lord of all, and when the whole earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

PART III.

Considerations of a still higher order than those I have mentioned remain.

Moral teaching is a question of the highest importance in the comparison of religions, and in this particular Buddhism occupies a peculiarly high position amongst the religions of the world. Its moral teaching is considered by many to stand next to that of Christianity. There is hardly any room, however, for the comparison of Hinduism with Christianity in respect of moral teaching, for in Hinduism, considered as a religion—considered as a system of beliefs and worship—moral teaching finds no place. Some persons will feel inclined to repel this assertion as an unfounded calumny. They will remind me that I have myself freely admitted that Indian literature abounds in moral teaching. Let me explain, therefore, what I mean. Undoubtedly Indian literature contains a large amount of moral teaching, some of which is of a very high order; but it is a remarkable circumstance, and one which European Chris-

tians find it difficult to believe or even to comprehend, that this moral teaching is totally unconnected with religious worship. Books containing moral disquisitions and maxims may be studied at home, but in the temple they are unknown and unheard of. Morality is supposed to consist merely in the discharge of the duties of our caste and station towards our fellow-men; and the idealistic Indian philosophies will not allow much importance to be attached to the discharge of such duties, seeing that they teach that our fellow-men are after all, like ourselves, only the unreal inhabitants of an unreal world. Religion, on the other hand, is supposed to rise far above such petty considerations as the social duties, and to consist solely in the worship of the gods by means of the appointed praises, prayers, and observances, in the hope of obtaining thereby union with the Supreme Spirit and final emancipation. The duties of life are never inculcated in any Hindu temple. The discharge of those duties is never represented as enjoined by the gods, nor are any prayers ever offered in any temple for help to enable the worshippers to discharge those duties aright. It would be hard indeed even to conceive the possibility of prayers for purity ever being offered in a Hindu temple

to a divinity surrounded by a bevy of dancing girls. In Christian churches, on the other hand, Sunday after Sunday the minister stands up and in the name of God enjoins the worshippers not to steal, not to bear false witness, not to commit adultery, not to commit any of the four offences against God or of the six offences against man forbidden in the Ten Commandments, and then, after each proclamation of a Commandment, he joins with the people in asking God to have mercy upon them and to give them grace to keep that Commandment better in future. There is no such teaching of morality as this by any Brahman or priest in any temple in all India. Hence we often see religion going in one direction and morality in another. We meet with a moral Hindu who has broken altogether away from religion; and what is still more common, yet still more extraordinary, we meet with a devout Hindu who lives a flagrantly immoral life. In the latter case no person sees any inconsistency between the immorality and the devoutness. Christianity, on the other hand, unites morality to religion by an indissoluble bond. It teaches that the right discharge of our duties to our fellow-men is an essential portion of the duty we owe to God, and that the very purpose for which Christ

came into the world was "that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works[1]." Hence, though a man may be a pious Hindu without being truthful, pure, or just, it would be a contradiction in terms—it would be a sheer impossibility—to regard any person who was not truthful, pure, and just, as a pious Christian.

Our Bible is not only read in our houses, as Indian books are or may be, but is also read aloud in our churches, so that God's voice to man regarding what is to be done as well as what is to be believed may be audible to every one. Hinduism makes no such use of any portion of its sacred literature, and if it did, little moral advantage would accrue therefrom, for in many instances it is found that the more sacred the composition the less worthy its moral teaching is of God. In the Vedas, the most sacred compositions of all, the moral element is almost entirely absent, Hymn after hymn, Brâhmana after Brâhmana, Upanishada after Upanishada, we can detect only here and there a few rays of that divine light which should lead the soul from sin to righteousness, from sin to God. In the epic poems and the Purânas we find a mix-

[1] Titus ii. 14.

ture of good morality and bad—good advice vitiated by bad examples; but in so far as morals are concerned, the teaching of the philosophies, which profess to be the most authoritative of all Hindu teaching, is in reality the worst, for it represents the wise man—the man who has been moulded into perfection by divine philosophy—as regarding good and evil with equal unconcern.

What, on the other hand, are the characteristics of the moral teaching of the Bible? I shall reply respecting the Old Testament first. If any person, accustomed to compare and reflect, were to read the Old Testament through from the first word to the last for the first time, and were asked to state what he considered the most distinctive characteristics of its narratives, its poetry, and its prophecies, I feel sure that he would answer that there were two things in it with which he was especially struck; (1) its zeal for the unity of God, and (2) its zeal for righteousness. These two things are combined in the phrase "ethical monotheism," and it is a remarkable fact that the ethical monotheism of the Old Testament is the only ethical monotheism of which we find any trace in the ancient world. Take, for example, the oldest book in the Old Testament, the Book of Genesis, and

compare the narratives contained therein, especially the narrative of the Deluge, with the Indian and recently discovered Babylonian narratives corresponding thereto; and it will be evident at once that the grand object the author of the Book of Genesis had in view was not to amuse, nor merely to excite people's wonder, but to teach men that there was One God only, the Creator and Ruler of the world, and to deter them from sin. Another object would be apparent on further reflection, namely, that of showing how the way was prepared from the beginning for the advent of a Saviour. Look again at the Book of Psalms, a collection of hymns of various ages, but all written many centuries before the Christian era. If any person reads the hymns of the Vedas for the first time, he will be struck with surprise at the utterly wordly, un-ethical, un-spiritual tone by which they are generally pervaded. If he reads the Psalms for the first time, he will be struck with still greater surprise to find in so rude an age compositions so unworldly, so pure and sweet and heavenly, so deeply imbued with the love of truth, the love of righteousness, and the love of God.

The zeal for righteousness which burns in every page of the Old Testament does not wax

colder in the New, but glows therein with an intenser fervour and with a radiance which is all the lovelier because it seeks not to condemn, but to save. I do not deny that the morality of the New Testament belongs to a higher order of things than that of the Old. But if it be so, it is mainly for this reason, that whilst in the Old Testament Mercy was in the background and Justice appeared to occupy the field alone, in the New Testament Justice retires to the background, whilst Mercy comes forward and occupies the principal place. The moral teaching of the New Testament is so well known that I need not say anything in explanation of it. Let me only remind you of one portion of one of the Gospels, the Sermon on the Mount. No words of mine can characterise aright the teaching of that brief but wonderful sermon. Read it attentively, and in asking you to do this I have said all I have to say. Conscience, enlightened by Divine Grace, will say the rest.

I must not leave out of account the important advantages Christians enjoy from the example of every virtue set before them by Jesus Christ. When Christ came into the world, He came not only to teach men orally how they should walk and please God, but to

set before them for their imitation a pattern of every excellence, and finally to give His life for their salvation. Though God be invisible, those persons who had the happiness of seeing Christ saw God. In His justice, patience, wisdom, and mercy they saw the justice, patience, wisdom, and mercy of God. The example of Christ is especially beneficial in teaching His followers to abound in works of mercy and in endeavours to promote the welfare of their fellowmen, at whatever cost to their own comfort. He has taught His followers not only to be patient in suffering, but to brave suffering, to welcome suffering, in a good cause. He has taught them to forget themselves and do good to their neighbours, to be large-hearted, to cultivate the mind that was in Himself—a self-sacrificing mind, a mind that "scorned delights" and despised honour and life, for the sake of the welfare of the world. Many so called Christians, it is true, do not really imitate the example of Christ, but those who fail to do so, or who do not at least endeavour to do so, are reckoned by us unworthy of the Christian name.

If all I have said respecting the superiority of the teaching and aims of Christianity to those of Hinduism be true, we ought to find the results of the difference practically exempli-

fied in the national characteristics of the people of England and the people of India respectively. I admit that the moral superiority of English Christians is not so often as it ought to be practically exemplified. Christianity saves only those who believe in it, and unfortunately there are many English people who, though they profess and call themselves Christians, believe in nothing, and who, therefore, are benefited in nothing. On the other hand, though many individuals in Christian countries fail to walk worthily of their privileges, yet the influence of the better portion of the community makes itself manifest in various ways in the national life. Hence, if a comparison be made, not between some individuals of one nation and some individuals of another, but between the moral characteristics of Christian nations as a whole and those of non-Christian nations as a whole, I have no doubt that a candid Hindu will at once admit that in respect of truthfulness, moral courage, zeal for justice, sympathy with the suffering, unselfishness, and especially public spirit, the advantage is undoubtedly on the Christian side. A single illustration will suffice. Such help as has recently been rendered by England to India in its three successive famines never proceeded, and never could have

proceeded, from any but a Christian people, taught sympathy and charity by the example of Christ. He would be blind indeed who did not see that no Government, but a Christian Government, has ever set itself, or would ever set itself, to save life, at whatever cost, as ours has done; and he would be equally blind who did not see that it is as Christians, believing in a loving Master, and adherents of a religion of love, not merely as English people, descendants of the race that conquered India, that the people of England have come forward so promptly, so nobly, to help the people of this country in their dire emergency. Indians are accustomed to regard us as a just people, but very unsympathetic, and on occasions, very fierce. Whence did so unsympathetic a people learn to show such unparalleled sympathy, and so fierce a people such marvellous kindness? Whence, but from the well-spring of all that is highest and tenderest and best in this world of ours, the religion of Christ?

It is evident from the particulars now mentioned respecting the moral teaching of Christianity, not only that it rises above the level of any moral teaching which Hinduism may be supposed to possess, but also that it rises above the level of ordinary human nature. It does not swim with the stream of human ideas and in-

clinations, but sets itself firmly to resist the stream. It gives us a higher purpose of life and higher motives, and endeavours thereby to raise us to a higher level. Men never would have had either the inclination or the power to invent a religion which would put them to shame by its holiness. Christianity is so much higher than anything we suppose to be high in ourselves, and so much better than anything we suppose to be good in ourselves, that we cannot but conclude that it must have proceeded from a source far higher than either our own natures or our own environments, that is, from Him from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift. And the conclusion that it must have proceeded from our Father in heaven, who is as loving as He is holy, whilst it guards us from being content with a goodness which is merely earthly, encourages us also to endeavour to rise to what is heavenly. The practice of Christian virtue may be difficult, and in its highest shape, which we call holiness, very difficult, yet it is not impossible; for God is so full of grace that He not only commands, but bestows the help that is required to enable us to fulfil what He commands. To all who make known to Him their wants He grants the light, comfort, and strength they need.

I hope it will not be supposed, in consequence of anything I have now said, that I entertain a low opinion of everything Indian. I am very far from supposing everything which is indigenous to India evil. On the contrary, it is a wonder to my mind that the people of India, with such a religion as theirs, should possess so many good qualities as I believe they do; and my explanation of the wonder is that, notwithstanding their religion, God has conferred upon them, through the teaching of His providence and through the inheritance of experience, many excellent gifts. I admire much that I see amongst the people of India. I admire their religiousness, I admire their temperance, I admire their patience and gentleness and courtesy. I admire their care of their relations to the furthest remove, and in many particulars I admire what remains of the primeval framework of their village system and their social system. Only let the still more important elements of individual and national character which are produced by Christianity, and by Christianity alone, be superadded to these and similar characteristics of race, and the result will be a style of character of which neither India nor Christianity will have need to be ashamed.

PART IV.

Each of the considerations that have now been mentioned, whether respecting the special benefits Christianity confers in this life or with respect to the excellence of its moral teaching, seems to me weighty and important. Each argument taken by itself seems conclusive, and if so, the sum of such arguments ought to compel conviction. I have still, however, to call your attention to the highest considerations of all—considerations which are distinctively religious, and which will enable you to perceive how Christianity provides for the most important of those purposes for which a religion is required.

Hindus, as I have already said, are a pre-eminently religious people, and yet when they become Christians the first discovery they make, and they find it a wonderful discovery, is that there is really a God. Whilst they had God's name, or the names of the gods, continually on their lips before, they were practically "without God in the world." The gods of India conceal God from the people's view. Neither Vishnu

nor Siva is represented as the Creator of the world, and Brahmâ, who is represented as the Creator, is not worshipped. Vishnu and Siva are ordinarily represented merely as emanations from the Supreme God, but the attributes and actions ascribed to them are far from being divine; whilst the Supreme God Himself, whose existence is always admitted in words, is regarded, according to the most popular view of things, as simply an abstraction, destitute of attributes. No temple is erected to His honour, nor are there any rites prescribed for His worship. No assembly of Hindus, with the solitary exception of the Brâhma Samâja in Calcutta and a few other places, is ever convened for offering Him prayer and praise. No means are in operation for teaching people to know Him, or expounding to them how they may serve Him, and how His favour may be obtained. Worship is offered to every conceivable and inconceivable form of being, but no worship is offered to Him who is admitted to be not only the Supreme Being, but the only Source of Being. Like the "Nature" of European books, for all practical purposes He is non-existent. God is thus virtually expelled by Hinduism from the world He made, and the soul, deprived of the comfort of knowing its true Centre and

Rest, has to seek compensation, as best it may, in "worshipping and serving the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever," or in giving itself up to secular aims or sensual delights. It is the glory of Christianity, on the other hand, that whilst it strenuously contends for God's infinite majesty, it at the same time brings Him nearer and makes Him dearer to His children on earth by representing Him, not as a shadowy abstraction, but as a living, loving reality, as the God who made all things, who governs and directs all things, and who makes all things, good and evil, work together for the good of those who love Him. This one idea, "God is Love"—an idea found only in the Christian Scriptures, or in compositions that borrowed it from them—sets God before the soul in an entirely new light. It dispels from the mind the doubts and fears that formerly hid from it the face of God, or distorted the reflection of His face, as certainly and speedily as the shadows of the morning are dispelled by the rising sun.

All this, it may be said, is "Anthropomorphism[1]." I admit that it is. I admit and must needs do so, for the Bible itself teaches

[1] Anthropomorphism means attributing to God what is proper to man.

that God is incomprehensible. Our highest conceptions of Him touch at a few isolated points only the circumference of the great circle of His attributes. I am not ashamed, therefore, of the anthropomorphism He Himself has taught us, by allowing us to clothe our thoughts of Him in the style of expression which best suits the capacities and needs of our nature, to represent Him to ourselves in human relations, as a Master and King, as a Father, a Guide, and a Friend, and especially to believe that He became incarnate, that is, that He came amongst us Himself in the "form of a man," for the purpose of restoring to man the lost image of God.

Never perhaps is the superiority of Christianity to Hinduism more apparent than when we compare the Hindu incarnations with the incarnation of Christ.

Of the ten incarnations of Vishnu the two most important were that of Râma and that of Krishna. The rest might more properly be called apparitions than incarnations. The best of the incarnations, from a moral point of view, was Râma, who is represented as a model hero, brave in war and faithful in domestic life. Whatever his virtues may have been, however, he was equalled or surpassed, according to

the representations of the Râmâyana itself, by persons for whose divinity no claim is set up—equalled by his brothers Takshmana and Bharata, and far surpassed by his wife Sîtâ, the finest creation of the Hindu poetic mind.

The most popular of the incarnations is that of Krishna. It is a melancholy fact, however, that the moral evidence against Krishna's claims to divinity are of the most conclusive kind. The Bhagavad Gîtâ represents Krishna as saying, "As often as there is a decline of virtue or an increase of vice in the world, I create myself anew; and thus I appear from age to age for the preservation of the just, the destruction of the wicked, and the establishment of virtue." According to the teaching of this passage, Krishna's claims to be regarded as a true incarnation fall self-refuted to the ground, for his whole life, as depicted in the Mahâ-bhârata, and especially in the Bhâgavata Purâna, was in direct antagonism to this teaching. The Krishna of the Bhagavad Gitâ was bound to appear for the destruction of such a character as the Krishna of the Bhâgavata Purâna.

Hindus sometimes argue, and the Bhâgavata Purâna argues, that the impurities of Krishna's life are not to be imitated by his followers,

inasmuch as they were the actions of a god. This argument is refuted by anticipation in another passage in the Bhagavad Gîtâ. Krishna is represented as saying, "Whatever the prince practises, that the rest of the people practise: whatever example he sets, they follow. If I were not to continue acting (that is, performing moral and religious duties), men in all respects would follow my steps. If I were not to act, these men would be ruined, and I should become the author of a confusion (of castes), I should destroy these creatures." The claims set up on Krishna's behalf to immunity from moral obligations are here repudiated by Krishna himself. The theosophical Krishna refutes the mythological Krishna. The state of things deprecated by the Bhagavad Gîtâ in the passage last quoted is the very state of things that has been brought about. The people follow Krishna's steps and are ruined, for the stories related respecting Krishna's mode of life are calculated more than anything else to destroy the morals and corrupt the imaginations of the Hindu youth.

I ask you now to compare the Hindu incarnations—the best of them incarnations of manly courage, the worst of them incarnations of lasciviousness—with the incarnation of moral goodness, the incarnation of truth and purity, the

incarnation of self-sacrificing love, exhibited to the world in Christ. I ask you to ascertain for yourselves, by a conscientious examination of the Gospels, (1) whether it is not a fact that the character of Christ as represented in the Gospels, not in vague poetical imagery, but in minute historical detail, is distinguished beyond that of any other person recorded in history for purity, goodness, and grace? (2) whether the purpose for which God became a man, namely, to furnish men with a pattern of moral excellence and to reconcile sinful men to the holy and blessed God, was not a purpose worthy of a divine incarnation? (3) whether the life, doctrines, and death of Christ, or the influence of His life, doctrines, and death upon Christians, has not, as a matter of historical fact, been the origin of all that is most elevated in the moral and spiritual life of Christendom, and of all that has rendered Christendom the source of moral and spiritual life to the rest of the world? and (4) whether it would not be unreasonable and unscientific to attribute results so divine to anything less than a divine cause?

Hinduism, like Christianity, has its sacrifices, as well as its incarnations. Bloody sacrifices seem to have been offered in early times by

every race of people in the world. In ancient India, as we learn from the Vedas, the sacrifice held in highest esteem was that of the horse. Bloody sacrifices still continue to be offered by the mass of the people all over India, and have not entirely ceased even amongst the Brahmans. Unbloody sacrifices, however, that is, offerings of rice, fruits, &c., are the only sacrifices now offered in the daily service in the temples. If we consult Indian books of authority for the purpose of ascertaining the meaning and purport of these sacrifices, the only answer we shall receive must be regarded as very unsatisfactory. Sacrifices are represented as being offered for the purpose of appeasing the anger of the lower divinities and the hunger of the higher. The lower divinities and demons are represented as delighting in cruelty and thirsting for the blood of their victims, whilst the higher divinities, together with the *pitris* or progenitors, are represented as literally feeding upon the sacrifices offered to them, and as famishing if the supply of sacrificial food ceases! Christianity is the only religion ever known upon earth which can supply us with the information we seek respecting the history and signification of sacrifices. It alone can explain why bloody sacrifices came to be offered,

that is, because of man's sense of sin; what they imply, that is, that the wages of sin is death; and what they point to, that is, some mode of salvation dimly looming in the future by the substitution of one life for another. Christianity also alone shows how such sacrifices have been fulfilled and rendered henceforth unnecessary by Christ's sacrifice of Himself on the Cross for the sins of the world. In the sacrificial death of Him who is Sarvayajneśvara, the Lord of all sacrifices, we see clearly exemplified the truth which all sacrifices mysteriously taught, salvation by the offering of life for life.

Hinduism has much to say respecting the bondage and deliverance of the soul, and herein it would seem that it must necessarily run in parallel lines with the teaching of Christianity respecting sin and salvation, but on closer scrutiny the resemblance almost entirely disappears. For when stripped of fine words, which convey a Christian sound to the ear but were not intended to bear a Christian meaning, the bondage of which Hinduism treats comes to signify little more than the bondage of matter or of natural limitations, and the deliverance promised turns out to be little more than deliverance from the *ego*, from personal existence, and the necessity

involved therein of repeated births. Christianity teaches, on the other hand, that the real and only bondage of the soul is sin, and makes known a salvation which consists in deliverance from sin and in the eternal duration of a conscious, happy, personal existence in the presence of a Holy God. The point we have now reached is the most important of all with which this argument deals, and will, therefore, require to be elucidated a little more fully.

The great aim of Christian teaching, to which everything else is only preparatory and subordinate, is to bring to bear on the conscience of every man all that is included in the doctrine of the Cross.

The first portion of this most important teaching is to convince men of sin. Hinduism does not ignore man's sinfulness altogether, but it explains it away or palliates it. The theory most popular amongst the masses makes God the author of sin. A view of sin regarded as more orthodox is that it is man's misfortune rather than his fault, being a necessary result of the influences he has inherited from his previous births. The so-called philosophic view is that sin, like the world itself, is a mere illusion, not a reality. No Indian system teaches that sin has its seat in the human will, being a

voluntary preference of evil to good. Christianity, on the other hand, teaches that man is not a mere machine, but a free agent, responsible to God for every thought, word, and action. It teaches that moral evil is not a legitimate acting out of the laws of our nature, but is rebellion against the highest element in our nature—against Conscience, the voice of God within, the Antaryâmin, the Presence of God within, and is therefore rebellion against God. It calls it "sin," instead of vice, to denote that it is an offence, not against ourselves merely, or against society merely, but against God's authority and law. It declares that all men are sinners in order that "every mouth may be stopped and the whole world become guilty before God;" but it does this, not because it hates men and delights to make them miserable, but because it loves them and seeks to make them happy. Christianity wounds only that it may heal. It convinces men of their disease only that it may be permitted to apply the remedy. It teaches that we have fallen into "a horrible pit, filled with miry clay," only that it may "set our feet upon a rock and put into our mouths a new song of praise unto our God."

For Christianity, the only religion which

treats man as a sinner, is also the only religion which brings man the good news of salvation from sin. Other religions may profess to teach of sin and salvation, but their teaching is vitiated by evident proofs of unreality. Christianity alone teaches that sin is a real evil, and reveals a salvation which provides a real remedy. In the Cross of Christ, that is, in the sacrifice which Christ voluntarily offered on the Cross for the sins of the world, we see a means whereby sin may be expiated, that is, so forgiven that the forgiveness does not violate, but illustrates and confirms, the moral order of the world; whilst in the communication of divine help and grace to all who lay hold of the Cross we see a means whereby evil habits may be overcome, the mind cleansed, and new love, new life obtained. Thus Christianity sets itself first to produce an imperative sense of want, and then to supply that want, and all wants, out of the fulness that is in Christ. Well may it, therefore, take to itself the name of the Gospel, that is, the good news; for the good news of salvation is its chief theme, and the chief work of its teachers is the proclamation of this good news to every creature.

Hinduism and Christianity may be admitted up to a certain point to have the same object

in view. But how different are the methods they pursue, especially in regard to the vitally important point of the teaching of each respecting sin and salvation. Hinduism claims, like Christianity, to have proceeded from the Lawgiver and Moral Governor of the universe, yet it ignores some of the most important principles implied in every theory of moral government. It exhibits no sense of the evil of sin considered as a violation of law, as defiling the conscience, and as counteracting the ends for which man was created. It makes no provision for the re-establishment of the authority of the Divine Lawgiver by the expiation of sin without detriment to the claims of justice. It teaches nothing and knows nothing respecting the forgiveness of sin. It makes no provision for the healing of the wounds of sin-sick souls by the communication of sanctifying grace. The salvation it teaches is not a salvation from sin by means of a new birth to righteousness, commencing in the present life and perfected hereafter, but merely a salvation from the necessity of being born again in repeated births, by means of the final emancipation of spirit from ignorance and self-consciousness. The moral system of Hinduism fails, therefore, in the most essential points—the vindication of the justice of the

Moral Ruler of the universe and the restoration of harmony between man's moral nature and the constitution of things under which he is placed.

In the important particulars I have now mentioned Christianity succeeds where Hinduism fails. It succeeds not by its speculations about the Divine Essence or its fine-spun theories about Spirit and Matter, but by its facts, and it succeeds most conspicuously in those very particulars in which the failure of Hinduism is most complete. Its mission in the world is to reconcile justice to mercy, man to God, and it effects the objects of its mission in every soul in which the voluntary self-sacrificing *tapas*[1], the suffering and dying love of God manifest in the flesh, is realised by faith, and in which the attraction of that sacrifice produces the resolution to offer soul and body in return as a living sacrifice of grateful obedience.

It would be unjust, and therefore unwise, to represent Christianity as in every point and particular antagonistic to Hinduism; but I may fairly claim, in behalf of Christianity, that it contains the complement and full development of some portions of the Hindu system which Hindus themselves have failed to appre-

[1] *Tapas*, an act of devout self-mortification.

ciate, or perhaps even to comprehend. Christianity is a system, therefore, which Hindus might be expected to be eager to accept. Here is the hidden mystery of their incarnations, their sacrifices, and self-mortifications. Here their doctrine of *bhakti*, or exclusive faith, receives for the first time a worthy object. They have long been "feeling after" the truth. Here the truth visits them unsought, and is offered to them in all its completeness by Him who is "the way, the truth, and the life[1]."

"Immortal EAST! dear land of glorious lays,
Lo! here the 'UNKNOWN GOD' of thy unconscious praise.
O! Lord, our Lord, and spoiler of our foes,
There is no light but Thine; with Thee all beauty glows."
KEBLE'S CHRISTIAN YEAR.

"As I passed by and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom, therefore, ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you." (St. Paul's Address to the Athenians, Acts of the Apostles xvii. 23.)

I wish here to make a remark on an error into which some persons are apt to fall. When a person does not see his way to accepting Christianity as the only true and the only divine religion, but yet is willing to admit, as most

[1] St. John xiv. 6.

Hindus are, that in each of the particulars I have mentioned it is decidedly superior to Hinduism, he is apt to fall into the error of supposing that it is not necessarily his duty to become a Christian at all; whereas, as it seems to me, it is his duty to embrace Christianity all the same, as a better religion than Hinduism and as the best religion he is acquainted with. In secular matters we always think we show our wisdom in choosing the best course that is open to us. If any person considers the European system of medicine more scientific, and therefore safer, than any other, he avails himself at once of the benefits of European medical treatment, without waiting to determine whether it is his imperative duty to do so, in consequence of no other course being possible. So also in the case of religion. God points out to us our duty with sufficient clearness, when He points out to us what is best. None will be rejected who come unto God through Christ, however weak their faith, however imperfect their spiritual discernment, but this is a reason why all should come to Him, not why any should suppose that, because they think they are not driven to Him by the irresistible force of necessity, they are at liberty to keep aloof from Him altogether. To a man of reasonable mind the

course which appears best and the course which it is necessary to follow should appear identical.

For myself, however, though I am prepared to tolerate this lower line of argument, I am far from being content with it. If all that I have alleged be true, the advocates of Christianity are entitled to take their stand on much higher ground, and to plead that Christianity should be accepted by all on account of its unique and necessary truth. It is not enough to say of such a religion that it occupies the highest position amongst the religions known in India or in the world. It stands absolutely alone in the most important particular of all. It alone actually accomplishes the ends at which other religions aim. It will not consent, therefore, to be regarded as one religion out of many, better perhaps than others, diviner perhaps than others, but not on that account necessarily to be adopted by every one. It claims to be regarded, as indeed it is, as the only religion which fulfils the most important of those purposes for which a religion is required, as the only religion which brings salvation, as the only religion which reconciles man to God, as the only religion which produces not merely moral amendment, but a new heart and a new character. It claims, therefore, to be a religion which

every man is bound to adopt in accordance with the good purpose of the goodness of Him who tasted death for every man. It asks admission into every human heart, not as a suppliant, but on the authority of the Highest Law.

Advitîya Devâya namah.

Adoration to the Only God.

NOTE.

Some persons are deterred from embracing Christianity by the difficulties it is supposed to contain. They have become acquainted with the existence of certain difficulties in connection with the origin and history of the Bible and the origin and history of Christianity and the Christian Church, and they feel inclined in consequence to say that if God had given men a religion He would have given them one against which it would be impossible to raise any objection. I answer, that if Christianity were free from difficulties it would be still harder to believe that it came from God, because every thing which has actually come from God, or which we believe to have come from Him, is full of difficulties, many of which appear absolutely insoluble. The world we live in, of which we believe God to be the author, is full of diffi-

culties; the order of the world, the development of social life, the course of human history, which we believe to be under God's government, are still more full of difficulties; and God's own existence, that sacred truth which lies at the foundation of every other truth, is so full of difficulties to our finite comprehension, that we find it to be our highest wisdom, not to philosophise, but to be silent and adore.

The existence of sin in the world is sometimes, most unreasonably, brought forward as an objection to Christianity. It is asked, why did not God prevent sin from coming into the world? I answer, first, that neither the Bible nor Christianity is in any way responsible for the existence of sin. Sin existed in the world and in human nature long before Christianity appeared, and it exists now where Christianity has never been heard of. If any objection is made on this ground, it should be made, therefore, not against Christianity, but against the world itself. The office of Christianity is to help men to overcome sin, not to vindicate God's reasons for permitting it to appear in the world. My second answer is, that to ask God why He did not prevent sin from coming into the world is

virtually to ask Him why He did not make a world different from the one which actually exists. The course He appears to have taken in this matter is in perfect accordance with the analogy of all His dealings with the world and with mankind, whether in the domain of natural phenomena or in the domain of morals. In every department of things we find that He governs the world, not on the plan of preventing evil, but on the plan of bringing good out of evil. In every department of things we find also on careful scrutiny that the prevention of evil, on the plan of rendering it impossible, would probably have brought with it the prevention of some important good. Thus, if sin, which is an abuse of free-will, had been prevented, in the only way in which absolute prevention would have been possible, by depriving men of free-will, that is, by reducing them to the condition of irresponsible machines, the remedy would have been worse than the disease, for the existence of virtue would have been as effectually precluded as that of moral evil. As sin is not sin, so virtue is not virtue, when it is not voluntary.

To stipulate, therefore, that a religion, if it

has come from God, must contain no difficulty, and nothing which can be objected to by any one, would be like stipulating that a world, if it has come from God, must be in strict accordance with all our ideas of abstract perfection; that is, that there must be no room in it for adjustment or development, nor any need for man's doing battle with nature and subduing it to his use, that it should be a world without corruption or transformation, without excess or defect, without droughts or floods, without births or deaths.

The most formidable objections that have ever been urged against the Bible go only to show the probability of its having proceeded from the same source as the world itself—a conclusion with which all devout believers in God will be content. God's hand-writing, so to speak, is difficult to read. Difficulties within difficulties constitute His signature—His sign-manual—His mysterious monogram,—without which no communication purporting to come from Him is genuine. The throne of God is surrounded, as we must admit, with dark clouds, but we believe, notwithstanding those clouds, that it is a throne of righteousness, and that "what we know not now

we shall know hereafter." We believe that the clouds by which that throne is surrounded, though dark to us, are ever bright with sunshine on the further side, the side nearest the Presence.